NUMB. CXVI.

The Prompter.

Leave Us, as We ought to be;
Leave Us BRITONS, ROUGH, *and* FREE.

AMB. PHIL.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19. 1735.

To the PROMPTER.

SIR, *Decem.* 16, 1735.

"AS *unpolite* as your Endeavour to demoliſh Operas, and ſupport the Stage is, you have, I can aſſure you, a great many People on your Side, that thank and praiſe you for it, and heartily wiſh you Succeſs. I have juſt now read your laſt Paper on that Subject, that has, prefix'd to it, thoſe delightful Verſes of *Roſcommon*. Surely, no Mortal can read it without being convinced. But is there any thing in the *Report* you mention about the Downfal of Operas, or do you cry, *Io triumphe*, too ſoon? As long as the *Great*, the GREATEST in the Nation, encourage them, your Work will go but heavily. But you tell us, the *Royal Family* intend to go to Plays oftner than they uſed, and that 'tis *reſolved upon*. I will believe you, and wou'd not loſe the Pleaſure of believing a thing I am ſo deſirous of ſeeing.

"I cannot help telling you, Mr. *Prompter*, that I was ſurprized, and half angry, at you, when I found you talking of thoſe *melting Airs*, and *ſoft Thrillings* in the Operas. If they cauſe ſuch *Emotions* and *Agitations*, ſuch *Situations of Mind* as you ſpeak of, *too feelingly* I think; why then, depend on't, they will laſt longer than you imagine. I doubt I ſhould have a better Opinion of them, if they *touched* me in ſuch a manner. But I own to you very honeſtly, that I never had the *Reſolution and Patience* to ſit through an Opera in my Life, nay, that I am tired, and ſick, and miſeaable, before the End of the firſt Act. I have often thought too, every body elſe, as far as my Eyes could reach, as *unaffected* as myſelf; for People were gaping and yawning all round me: *damning* the *Recitativo*, wiſhing for *Farinelli* again, and declaring aloud, that the Acts were too long. Upon the whole, I believe, that *ſtrange Situation of Mind* you ſpeak of, is ſooner produced by a *warm* Scene, in a well-acted Play, or the *agile* Motions of a *Roland* or *Denoyer*, than by all the Quaverings of an *emaſculated Wretch* at the Opera.

"I have heard ſenſible People expreſs --- their Aſtoniſhment at the Countenance --- and Reception Eunuchs meet with in *England*. I am told Lords and Dukes are to be ſeen at their *Levees*. Bleſs the *Prince of Modena*, who ſhewed us the other Day how *our Nobility* ought to uſe them. I heard, in a Company of Perſons, illuſtrious for Senſe and good Breeding, that *S—n—ſ—no*, having got Permiſſion to wait on that Prince, (when he entered the Room) fell *proſtrate* and *licked the Duſt*; and tho' he did ſo three times, the *noble-minded* Prince uſed him as *Nobles* do in other Countries; he did not deſcend ſo *low* as *to ſpeak* to him, did not *look at him*, did not *ſeem to know* that the *propudious Creature* was in the Room. Surely 'tis enough that they are paid ſo *abundantly*; why make *Companions* and *Equals* of them? No *Man* converſes with an *Eunuch* any where but in *England*, unleſs he has a Mind to *marry it*, as *Nero* did *Sporus**.

* 'Tis worth one's while to read the Paſſage of *Suetonius* where this is told. 'Tis in *Nero*, Chap. 28. *Puerum Sporum, exſectis teſtibus, etiam in muliebrem naturam transfigurare conatus, cum dote & flameo per ſolenne nuptiarum, celeberrimo officio deductum ad ſe pro uxore habuit. Extatque cujuſdam non inſcitus jocus "Bene agi potuiſſe cum rebus humanis, ſi Domitius pater talem habuiſſet uxorem."* *Sporus*, his Minion, HE caſtrated, and having done all he could to *tranſmute* him into a Woman, married him publickly, with all the Formalities of a Wedding; the Writings, Dowry, and Veil; and invited a vaſt deal of Company; and when the Ceremony was over, had him *conducted*, like a Bride, to his Houſe, and uſed him as his Wife. Upon which ſome body made a Jeſt good enough, *that it wou'd have been well for Mankind, if his Father* Domitius *had had no other Wife*. What follows in *Suetonius* is quite aſtoniſhing, and hardly credible! But we have much the ſame Account in *Tacitus Annal.* 15, 37. *Paucos poſt dies uni ex illo* contaminatorum *grege, cui nomen* Pythagoræ *fuit, in modum ſolennium conjugiorum denupſiſſet*. There happens to be great Variety of Readings in the Name *Pythagoræ*. Some Critics wou'd have it *Pyrrhagoræ*; other *Doryphoro*; why not *Faronello*, a bold Conjecture, you'll ſay. And yet *Faronello* is as like *Pythagoræ*, as *Doryphoro* is.

"BUT,

" But to come back to my Purpoſe.——— " I can't forbear repeating it, that I am heartily " glad the Opera is in a languiſhing State; that " there is ſo much as a *Report*, that the *Engliſh* " Stage will be encouraged and *dignified*; and that " next Winter, there will not be found in this " *Kingdom of Men*, one of thoſe *Effæminvti*, thoſe " *Opprobria humani generis*. What might we not " expect from the Theatre, if once an Actor ſhou'd " get, for his Induſtry and Study to pleaſe, a third " Part of what *Farinelli* gets this Year? But are " there any Hopes that they will be really driven " out? And ſhall we live to ſee a Circumſtance " in our Time, ſo like what happened in the " Reign of *Titus Veſpaſian*, who was called the " *Amor & Deliciæ humani generis*? *Aurelius* " *Victor* ſays, *Enervatorum Greges abire præcepit*. " He ſent them all packing at once. *Greges Ener-* " *vatorum* is quite frightful. We are not come " to that paſs yet — I can't tell how ſoon we may; " for, I hear, they are importing *freſh*, *new*, and " *young*, for all your declaiming. A *Præceptum* from " an *Imperator*, was highly proper in that Time; " and a *Diſcouragement* would be no leſs *effectual* " in ours. But why did *Titus* order all thoſe *vile* " *Wretches*, *Catamites*, *Eunuchs*, *Exoletes* to be " gone? Why he preſently ſaw their vile Ten- " dency on the Morals of his People, and thought " it of too great Weight to be neglected.

" But, Mr. *Prompter*, if all your Attempts to " pull down *Operas*, and get rid of theſe *Monſters*, " ſhould prove ineffectual, I have a *Thought* come " into my Head, that I believe will not fail. In- " deed, I ſcarce dare communicate it, but when " the Publick Good is in View, nothing ſhou'd " hinder a Man. It is this then, for I muſt tell " you; Suppoſe we ſhould *caſtrate*, or *qualify*, " our *Women*, as they do their *Men* in *Italy*. If " you *ſhrink*, 'tis becauſe you don't know ancient " Hiſtory, and the Inſtitutes and Practices of Ori- " ental Nations. *Herodotus* ſays ſomewhere, that " *Gyges*, King of the *Lydians*, was thought to have " been the firſt that did *caſtrare puellas*; and " *Xanthus*, in the ſecond Book of his Hiſtory of " the *Lydians*, ſays, he practiſed it with this View, " *ut iis ætate & forma florentibus ſemper uteretur*, " *that they might always look young and beautiful.* " *A vaſt* Advantage this, and worth trying for, if " there was no other. I can't think it a material " Objection, that the Cuſtom is quite *drop'd* all " over the World; ſo are many other Uſages that " deſerve to be revived.

" 'Tis plain, that in this way thoſe Shoals of " Females that wander about the Town, quite " uſeleſs for want of Husbands or Lovers, might " be made very ſerviceable to the *Publick*, by ſo " conſiderable an Improvement of Operas. But " I find I am got a little beſide my Purpoſe. For " I propoſe the thing, becauſe I am aſſured it " clears the Voices of *Girls*, as well as *Boys*. " And ſince Women have naturally ſhriller and " ſweeter Pipes than Men, if the artificial Im- " provement ſhou'd be but equal, it will be an an- " gelical Charm to hear them. I may tell them too, " for their Encouragement, that if ſome of them will " but once *venture*, they may happen to get 2000 " Pounds a Year for Singing; whereas without " *that*, they may remain in Obſcurity, and be " *Chamber* and *Cook-Maids* as long as they live. " What Seraphic Creatures the *Cuzzonis* and *Fau-* " *ſtinas* wou'd have been, had they been ſo ſerv'd " in their Youth? And who does not ſee in *Fa-* " *rinelli's* Countenance, that if he had been *more* " than what he is, he had been *leſs*, and would " never have riſen above a *Dragoon* or a *Dray-* " *man*,

" *Profuerat manſiſſe virum. Felicior exſtat*
" *Opprobrio. Serviret adhuc, ſi fortior eſſet*,

" is finely ſaid by *Claudian*, of the *Eunuch Eu-* " *tropius*.

" This Thought of mine being quite new and " in Embryo, I take the Liberty to call upon our " Phyſicians, and Surgeons, and all Kind of Im- " provers of Natural Philoſophy, to think of the " beſt and ſafeſt Method of Operation. And in- " deed there are ſuch Swarms of *Profeſſors* in all " Kinds, that I have great Hopes the right Way " of doing the Thing will ſoon be found out. " I am,

Yours,

THOMAS MANLY.

P. †

The Letter ſigned Timothy Gubbins *is come to hand, and ſhall be printed as ſoon as poſſible. That Gentleman's particular Correſpondence is earneſtly deſired by the* Prompter.

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